



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
"Creating Community Through People, Parks and Programs"



Tim Gallagher, Director

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County Operated Swimming Pools to Close One Week Early

The Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation has announced swimming pools operated by the County will close one week early this year due to budget constraints. With few exceptions the pools will close at the end of the day on Sunday, August 24, 2003.

One pool remaining open is Roosevelt Park normally operated year-round by the County. Two others, Ted Watkins Park and Victoria Park pools will reopen later in September for an extended season thanks to a grant to the Department by the Aquatic Foundation of Metropolitan Los Angeles and Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke.

The pool closures are being driven by a requirement of the Department to absorb increases in unavoidable costs such as worker's compensation. Absorbing such costs has resulted in the need to shorten the fiscal year 2003-04 pool season by two weeks (pools will open one week later next spring); to reduce service levels for various grounds maintenance contracts; and to reduce positions in Planning and Project Management among other things.

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As a result of ongoing economic instability and the County's structural deficit primarily due to revenue sources slowing down or declining, the Department was required to curtail \$3.6 million ensuing in the loss of County Park Trail Crew, cut backs in utility use including reduced night-time lighting, and the return of the operation to the State of California of two popular parks which have been operated by the County for over 20 years at no cost to the State. Those parks are Castaic Lake State Recreation Area and Placerita Canyon State Park. On August 5, 2003, the Board approved assigning the County's current operation and maintenance of Placerita Canyon to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy on a month-to-month basis effective September 1, 2003. Overall, the Department of Parks and Recreation has lost 65 staff positions this year due to the curtailment.

Director Tim Gallagher asked the Board of Supervisors to spare the Department of curtailments in budget hearings. He unsuccessfully argued, "There is undoubtedly a critical relationship between the provision of recreational opportunities for youth and families, and decreased vandalism, truancy, graffiti, gang violence, drug abuse and other societal ills." The Board faced with budget deficit of an estimated \$840 million and increasing an additional \$144 million with the passage of the state budget was not able to avoid cuts to County parks and recreation services.

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